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Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 24 March 2016

31/26. Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief

The Human Rights Council,

Reaffirming the commitment made by all States under the Charter of the United Nations to promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to, inter alia, religion or belief,

Reaffirming also Human Rights Council resolutions 16/18 of 24 March 2011, 19/25 of 23 March 2012, 22/31 of 22 March 2013, 25/34 of 28 March 2014 and 28/29 of 27 March 2015, and General Assembly resolutions 66/167 of 19 December 2011, 67/178 of 20 December 2012, 68/169 of 18 December 2013, 69/174 of 18 December 2014 and 70/157 of 17 December 2015,

Reaffirming further the obligation of States to prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion or belief and to implement measures to guarantee the equal and effective protection of the law,

Reaffirming that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides, inter alia, that everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief, which shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his or her choice and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his or her religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching,

Reaffirming also the positive role that the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and full respect for the freedom to seek, receive and impart information can play in strengthening democracy and combating religious intolerance, and also that the exercise of the right to freedom of expression carries with it special duties and responsibilities, in accordance with article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

Expressing deep concern at those acts that advocate religious hatred and thereby undermine the spirit of tolerance,

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Reaffirming that terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group,

Reaffirming also that violence can never be an acceptable response to acts of intolerance on the basis of religion or belief,

Reaffirming further the positive role that the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the full respect for the freedom to seek, receive and impart information can play in strengthening democracy and combating religious intolerance,

Reaffirming the positive role of human rights education and training in promoting tolerance, non-discrimination and equality,

Deeply concerned about incidents of intolerance, discrimination and violence against persons based on their religion or belief in all regions of the world,

Deploring any advocacy of discrimination or violence on the basis of religion or belief,

Strongly deploring all acts of violence against persons on the basis of their religion or belief, and any such acts directed against their homes, businesses, properties, schools, cultural centres or places of worship,

Concerned about actions that wilfully exploit tensions or target individuals on the basis of their religion or belief,

Noting with deep concern the instances of intolerance, discrimination and acts of violence in many parts of the world, including cases motivated by discrimination against persons belonging to religious minorities, in addition to the negative projection of the followers of religions and the enforcement of measures that specifically discriminate against persons on the basis of religion or belief,

Expressing concern at the growing manifestation of intolerance based on religion or belief that can generate hatred and violence among individuals from and within different nations that may have serious implications at the national, regional and international levels, and in this regard emphasizing the importance of respect for religious and cultural diversity and interfaith and intercultural dialogue aimed at promoting a culture of tolerance and respect among individuals, societies and nations,

Recognizing the valuable contribution of people of all religions or beliefs to humanity and the contribution that dialogue among religious groups can make towards an improved awareness and understanding of the common values shared by all humankind,

Recognizing also that working together to enhance the implementation of existing legal regimes that protect individuals against discrimination and hate crimes, increase interfaith and intercultural efforts and expand human rights education are an important first step in combating incidents of intolerance, discrimination and violence against individuals on the basis of religion or belief,

Taking note of General Assembly resolution 68/127 on a world against violence and violent extremism, adopted by the Assembly by consensus on 18 December 2013, and welcoming the leading role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in promoting intercultural dialogue, the work of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures, and the work of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural dialogue in Vienna, and Assembly resolution 65/5 of 20 October 2010 on World Interfaith Harmony Week, proposed by King Abdullah II of Jordan,

Welcoming in this regard all international, regional and national initiatives aimed at promoting interreligious, intercultural and interfaith harmony and combating discrimination against individuals on the basis of religion or belief, including the launching of the Istanbul Process for Combating Intolerance, Discrimination and Incitement to Hatred and/or Violence on the Basis of Religion or Belief, and taking note of the recent initiative of the chairmanship of Albania of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe under the theme "United in diversity" and the initiative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence,

1. *Expresses deep concern* at the continued serious instances of derogatory stereotyping, negative profiling and stigmatization of persons based on their religion or belief, and programmes and agendas pursued by extremist organizations and groups aimed at creating and perpetuating negative stereotypes about religious groups, in particular when condoned by Governments;

2. *Expresses its concern* that incidents of religious intolerance, discrimination and related violence, and of negative stereotyping of individuals on the basis of religion or belief, continue to rise around the world, condemns in this context any advocacy of religious hatred against individuals that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, and urges States to take effective measures, as set forth in the present resolution, consistent with their obligations under international human rights law, to address and combat such incidents;

3. *Condemns deeply* any advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, whether it involves the use of print, audiovisual or electronic media or any other means;

4. *Welcomes* international, regional and national initiatives aimed at promoting interreligious, intercultural and interfaith harmony and combating discrimination against individuals on the basis of religion or belief, in particular the series of experts' meetings held in Washington, D.C., London, Geneva, Doha and Jeddah, in the framework of the Istanbul Process to discuss the implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 16/18;

5. *Notes* the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the holding of four regional workshops, in Austria, Chile, Kenya and Thailand, on separate but related issues, and the final workshop in Morocco and its outcome document, the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, and the recommendations and conclusions contained therein;

6. *Recognizes* that the open, public debate of ideas, and interfaith and intercultural dialogue, at the local, national and international levels can be among the best protections against religious intolerance and can play a positive role in strengthening democracy and combating religious hatred, and convinced that continuing dialogue on these issues can help to overcome existing misperceptions;

7. *Notes* the speech given by the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference at the fifteenth session of the Human Rights Council, and draws on his call upon States to take the following actions to foster a domestic environment of religious tolerance, peace and respect by:

(*a*) Encouraging the creation of collaborative networks to build mutual understanding, promoting dialogue and inspiring constructive action towards shared policy goals and the pursuit of tangible outcomes, such as servicing projects in the fields of education, health, conflict prevention, employment, integration and media education;

(*b*) Creating an appropriate mechanism within Governments to, inter alia, identify and address potential areas of tension between members of different religious communities, and assisting with conflict prevention and mediation;

(*c*) Encouraging the training of government officials in effective outreach strategies;

(*d*) Encouraging the efforts of leaders to discuss within their communities the causes of discrimination, and evolving strategies to counter these causes;

(*e*) Speaking out against intolerance, including advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence;

(*f*) Adopting measures to criminalize incitement to imminent violence based on religion or belief;

(*g*) Understanding the need to combat denigration and negative religious stereotyping of persons, and incitement to religious hatred, by strategizing and harmonizing actions at the local, national, region and international levels through, inter alia, education and awareness-building;

(*h*) Recognizing that the open, constructive and respectful debate of ideas, and interfaith and intercultural dialogue at the local, national and international levels, can play a positive role in combating religious hatred, incitement and violence;

8. *Calls upon* all States:

(*a*) To take effective measures to ensure that public functionaries, in the conduct of their public duties, do not discriminate against an individual on the basis of religion or belief;

(*b*) To foster religious freedom and pluralism by promoting the ability of members of all religious communities to manifest their religion, and to contribute openly and on an equal footing to society;

(*c*) To encourage the representation and meaningful participation of individuals, irrespective of their religion, in all sectors of society;

(*d*) To make a strong effort to counter religious profiling, which is understood to be the invidious use of religion as a criterion in conducting questionings, searches and other law enforcement investigative procedures;

9. *Encourages* States to consider providing updates on efforts made in this regard as part of ongoing reporting to the Office of the High Commissioner;

10. *Calls upon* States to adopt measures and policies to promote full respect for and protection of places of worship and religious sites, cemeteries and shrines, and to take measures in cases where they are vulnerable to vandalism or destruction;

11. *Takes note* of the report submitted by the High Commissioner pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 25/34 summarizing the contributions received from States,[1] and also takes note of the conclusions of the report based on those contributions;

12. *Stresses* the urgent need to implement all parts of the action plan outlined in paragraphs 7 and 8 above with equal focus and attention in order to address religious intolerance;

[1] A/HRC/28/47.

13. *Requests* the High Commissioner to prepare and submit to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-fourth session a comprehensive follow-up report with elaborated conclusions based upon information provided by States on the efforts and measures taken for the implementation of the action plan outlined in paragraphs 7 and 8 above, and views on potential follow-up measures for further improvement of the implementation of that plan;

14. *Calls for* strengthened international efforts to foster a global dialogue for the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels, based on respect for human rights and diversity of religions and beliefs.

64th meeting
24 March 2016

[Adopted without a vote.]